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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQ-IRAN; CHAVEZ; ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES; 01/12/07

#### 1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

All local dailies report on the wave of domestic and international criticism unleashed by US President Bush's plan to send additional US troops to Iraq. Papers also cover the US blow to the Iranian consulate in Erbil; the Chavez administration's 'totalitarianism'; and environmental degradation.

#### 2. OPINION PIECES

- "Why?"

Paula Lugones, international columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (01/12) "The increasing influence of the Iranian theocratic regime on Iraq's Shiites is well-known. This was one of the clear consequences of Saddam's downfall and the US invasion.

"However, if Iran has had a low profile in this conflict so far and the major confrontation between Tehran and Washington has been related to the nuclear issue, why did the US decide to 'provoke it'? Why, when the entire world recommends talking with Iran? It is not mere chance that the blow to the consulate coincided with the announcement that additional troops will be sent (to Iraq). George W. Bush could be seeking to spread the conflict in order to justify his unpopular war policy. Nonetheless, Iran has the greatest Army in the region and a powerful influence in the Middle East. One should not play with Iran."

- "Chavez, a dismantled model"

Daily of-record "La Nación" carries an op-ed story by writer Marcos Aguinis, who says (01/12) "He was labeled as 'crazy,' 'tropical parrot,' hooligan,' but those terms are not enough to describe his powerful image. He has controlled Venezuela since December 1998, he wants to become the anti-US reference point for the world, influence the destiny of Latin America and establish a 21st century Socialism. Therefore, he does not mind having dropped his country into the most corrupt period of its corrupt history...

"He obtained the support of his people thanks to the high level of inefficiency, lack of responsibility and robbery in which the Venezuelan political leadership ended up... He won again the elections, in which impunity was so patent that they did not even bother to disguise the fraud."

- "The environmental debt"

Daily-of-record "La Nación" carries an op-ed story by contributor Jorge Coscia, who opines (01/12) "... Developing countries are the most affected by environmental degradation as a result of the transfer of contaminating technologies from industrialized countries.

"The message received by the leaders of neighboring countries is brief and clear - either you accept those type of investments or subject your citizens to unemployment and stagnation...

"... Contrary to what happens in the economic field, developing countries are environmental creditors of their financial creditors.

"A global solution is badly needed to protect the environment. Double standards are unacceptable. Environment should be protected in both developed and developing countries.

"... While it is true that our societies justly claim that new job opportunities be created, and this would involve higher investment, it is also true that the price could be too high."

### 13. EDITORIALS

- "Chavez tilts towards totalitarianism"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" editorializes (01/12) "The controversial president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, is again the center of the regional scenario for having disturbed the international community.

"... After two terms in office during which he destroyed the principle of separation of powers, concentrated full political authority, subjected the constitutional court, the electoral justice and the judiciary all over his country, and launched a dangerous arms race, he has just announced that he will swiftly lead Venezuela into socialism; which implies building a new political, social and economic system for his country.

"For this purpose, he announced a second reform of the Venezuelan Constitution because the previous one, promoted by Chavez himself, perhaps does not appear proper for a clear turn towards a totalitarian regime."

- "A controversial plan for Iraq"

An editorial in conservative "La Prensa" reads (01/12) "It is a fact that President George W. Bush's announced offensive to put the war on a safe track will be the last action before the transfer of power to Iraqis in a kind of protected democracy, or before total collapse and US troop withdrawal, which will be just as ominous and humiliating as in Vietnam. As if it were a poker game, the head of the White House decided to raise the stakes by trying more of the same and disregard the blunt message of the November elections, the view of Democratic leaders and Baker-Hamilton's suggestions. This is also a reassertion of the unilateral stance of the only world superpower, which in spite of being the guiding light towards freedom for the rest of the world, it cannot resolve alone such complex and broad problems like those in the Middle East...

"Bush's new plan has been overwhelmingly rejected by the US people and condemnation by Islamic public opinion while the EU showed skepticism. Not even loyal UK gave substantial support to his plan. It is not good news that the isolation of the 'only vital country in the world' has increased." (Madeleine Albright quoted)."

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